

Dear Council Members and City Staff,

I would like to the Council to address the on-going City support of the Public Arts Committee.

The 12/10/24 draft minutes show that 3 paid City Staff, Emi Theriault, John Jay and Nzuzi Mahungu all attended the meeting which lasted from 1pm to 2:41pm.

<https://www.cityofsebastopol.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/PAC-12-10-24-Draft-Minutes.pdf>

One of the PAC was absent so the meeting consisted of 3 staff members and 3 volunteer PAC members.

Given the City's financial situation, why is the public paying staff for this? Why is staff spending time on projects that have zero economic benefit and which might be considered an eyesore by some. Has Council looked at the public sculpture garden in Ives lately. There is an "art" work that consists of rebar and plastic streamers, which has no aesthetic value whatsoever.

At this point, there are significant needs in our public spaces that need to be addressed.

- 1) Connecting the sidewalk on Palm Avenue between Main Street and Petaluma Blvd. In the last two years, this sidewalk was slated for construction but was removed due to budget concerns. This is a short piece of sidewalk, about a half of block between two major streets with crosswalks. This should be a priority for capital improvements. It's projected cost was \$40,000.
- 2) Replacing the fence at Ives Park. Ives Park is a key center of community activity. The current fence has been there since the 1970s. The fence needs to be replaced as it is falling in and has an inconsistent aesthetic. The fence replacement is approximately \$120,000.
- 3) Widening the sidewalks and creating more parking around the Piazza lot. We have a great new crosswalk that does the important work of connecting the town square to the Barlow but the sidewalks are too narrow. In addition, we need more parking downtown. The City could increase parking by repairing Brown Street, which is completely degraded into a form of rubble, and adding parking and on Brown Street. I estimate that repaving and adding sidewalks would cost \$300,000.

I realize that the PAC is funded by a developer's fee for public art. As I have said many times in the past, the remaining funds should be kept for the maintenance of the art works. The same fee percentage should go into a "Public Spaces" fund to target specific capital improvements in public spaces such as parks, sidewalks, trails and community centers like Ives Pool and the community cultural center.

At this point in time, Sebastopol needs to concentrate repairing and upgrading basic public infrastructure like sidewalks and park fences and does not have the excess funds and staff time to develop and maintain a public art collection.

Staff time should not be allotted to this as it has no significant financial or cultural benefit, especially in the context of such outstanding need in basics like competing sidewalk connection between two crosswalks on major roads.

Please stop funding the PAC with staff time. Please use developer's fees for public spaces.

The City needs to prioritize public spaces which have a clear public benefit.

Thank you,
Kate Haug